

A Study of Ruth – Study Guide

Primary Commentary: *Concordia Commentary on Ruth* by John R. Wilch, M. Div.,
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Ruth's position in the Biblical Timeline

Spoiler Alert!! – The **Book of Ruth** has a happy ending with Boaz marrying Ruth 😊

Based on **Ruth 4:18 – 22**, where in the timeline of Old Testament (OT) history is the story of Ruth taking place?

Dr. Wilch in the *Concordia Commentary* concurs by stating (in part) the following:

*The events of **Ruth 1:1 – 4:17** took place within a span of about eleven years (see 1:4), sometime during the period of the Judges of Israel (1:1). It is in this historical context that the story must be understood...The events in Ruth probably took place during the latter part of the period of the Judges, thus in the late thirteenth or early twelfth century B.C...ca 1210 – 1190 B.C.*

However, compare **Matthew 1:1 – 6** (especially verses 5 and 6) with the timeline of OT history. What chronological problem do you see and how do we resolve this apparent conflict?

In the genealogy listed in **Ruth 4:18 – 22**, note that Boaz is the seventh person mentioned in the chronology and David is the tenth. Similarly in **Genesis 5:3 – 29**, Enoch is the seventh person mentioned and Noah the tenth. What is the significance of the placement of these names in each of these genealogical orders and how does this help support the solution for the apparent Biblical “inaccuracy” of the genealogy of **Matthew 1**.

How does this caution us in how the **Genesis 5** verses are frequently referenced by many Christians?

Date and Authorship of Ruth

The author of Ruth is unknown. Regarding this topic Dr. Wilch states (in part) the following:

*The date of composition fits best in the period of the monarchy [of King David] because the decidedly preexilic [pre-Babylonian exile 597 – 538 B.C.] use of classical Hebrew idioms, syntax, and style is comparable to that in the books of **Samuel** and differs markedly from post-exilic conventions in **Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles**... Expressions of gracious manners that are characteristic of the narratives of the books of **Genesis** and **Samuel** abound in **Ruth**, but are no longer found after about 850 B.C... [So] it is likely that this book was written sometime in the latter half of David's reign (ca. 1005 – 985 B.C.), along with the history of David's rise (**1 Samuel 16 – 2 Samuel 5**), as an apology for David as king of Israel, and when the unity of the kingdom was still intact and a live issue.*

Place in the Canon of Scripture

Ruth's inclusion in the Canon of Scripture has not been seriously challenged. Dr. Wilch in the *Concordia Commentary Ruth* notes this interesting point regarding its placement in the Canon:

*In the Hebrew canon, the book of **Ruth** appears in the third section, [the sections are The Torah, The Prophets, and The Writings] the "Writings", where it comes after **Proverbs**, so it appropriately follows the Praise of the Honorable Woman in Prov 31:10 – 31... But Ruth's place in the Septuagint is in the "Former Prophets", following **Judges**. This fits chronologically and contextually...*

Let's read **Ruth 1:1 – 5**.

Who were the Moabites and what is their relationship to the Israelites? See **Genesis 19:30 – 38**. (Also, look at your Bible's OT maps to see where Moab and Ammon are.)

Based on the following verses what is the history between the Israelites and Moabites and the consequences of that history?

Deuteronomy 2:8 – 9, 16 – 19 (The context of these verses is the time period immediately before the Israelites entered "The Promised Land")

Numbers 22:1 – 6 _____

Judges 3:12 – 15 _____

Deuteronomy 23:2 – 6 _____

What does this history and background say about the situation faced by Elimelech and Naomi and their mindset in emigrating to Moab?

As an individual Christian, how does this relate to our attitude toward people immigrating to the United States?

As a country? _____

With this history and background what would you expect to be the likely attitude of Naomi toward her sons marrying Ruth and Orpah?

Similarly, at this point in the account what would you anticipate Naomi's attitude toward Ruth and Orpah?

Let's now read one of the most moving accounts in the Bible – **Ruth 1:6 – 18**.

What is Naomi's motivation in urging her daughters-in-law to stay in Moab and return to the household of their fathers?

What is Naomi personally risking in urging this?

What else can we surmise about Naomi and their previous family life from the reaction of Ruth and Orpah wanting to go with Naomi and the weeping over their parting?

Ruth 1:16 – 17 is one of the most famous, and often quoted, speeches in the Bible. What is Ruth giving up by going with Naomi?

What is Ruth risking by going with Naomi?

How is Ruth a type of Christ? _____

What is the significance of Ruth saying “LORD” in verse 17?

How did the Holy Spirit work in converting Ruth to the true faith and what is the lesson for us in our own “evangelism” for Christ?

Let’s read **Ruth 1:19 – 22**.

Why is the whole town of Bethlehem “stirred” because of their return?

What do your commentaries say about Naomi’s play on words of “Naomi” vs “Mara”?

Looking back at verse 13 as well as these verses, what do we learn about Naomi attitude toward her plight and how is this often typical of our own view of life?

What do you think Ruth’s reactions might have been to Naomi’s attitude?

Note that in every book of the Bible prior to **Ruth** (and many of the books that follow) God, on occasion, works miracles. The **Book of Ruth** does not have any recorded miracles. What is the significance of this account in that light?

Let's read **Ruth 2:1 – 7**.

What do we learn about Boaz in verse 1? (Note any translations or commentaries that you might have)

Dr. Wilch, in *Concordia Commentary on Ruth*, notes the chiasmic literary structure of **Ruth 2:1 – 3** with the “Boaz/Clan of Elimelech” statements at the beginning and end of the chiasm. Dr. Wilch points out that this chiasmic structure emphasizes and introduces the importance of Boaz to the rest of the account. There are numerous other chiasmic themes throughout the book.

Why is Ruth described as “Ruth the Moabite” in verse 2 when the fact that she is a Moabite has already been fully established and repeated in Chapter 1?

Relative to the scene being described, what do we learn from **Leviticus 19:9 – 10; 23:22**, and **Deuteronomy 24:19 – 22**?

What is God's purpose in this law?

How does this apply to us in a physical way but also in spiritually in Christ?

Although God does not work any miracles in **Ruth**, what do we see in verse 3?

What does verse 4 tell us about Boaz and his foreman and how might this have impacted letting Ruth glean in the field? How do we know they were Lutherans? 😊

What does verse 7 tell us about Ruth and what example is there for us?

Let's read **Ruth 2:8 – 13**.

What is the significance of Boaz calling Ruth “my daughter”?

Boaz gives several directives/encouragements to Ruth in verses 8 – 9. What is the benefit to Ruth of each of those instructions?

What do we see in Ruth by her response on verse 10 and what example is that for us?

Looking at verses 11 and 12 what is Boaz's mindset and motivation in helping Ruth?

How can we do the same thing in our day-to-day life?

How does Boaz's kindness expand in **Ruth 2:14 – 16**? Do you think his motivation has changed? If so, why. If not, why not?

Let's finish chapter 2 by reading **Ruth 2:18 – 23**. How does the character of both Ruth and Naomi continue to be confirmed in these verses?

Before we read **Ruth 3**, let's get some background on what a "kinsman redeemer" is and the associated responsibilities as well as the laws that were in existence at that time regarding the ownership of land. First, in the **Book of Joshua** we read how God gave each clan of the Israelites specific territories and lands as specified by Moses and implemented by Joshua. **Joshua 15**, for instance, describes the allotments for all of the clans of Judah. An important aspect of this allotment is that the land was a gift from God and that He was the ultimate owner of the land. (just as all we have is a gift from God) and God wanted to help the Israelites to keep this in mind by commanding the "kinsman redeemer" concept as well as the Year of Jubilee.

Describe what is being commanded on the land and the workers in **Leviticus 25:1 – 7**.

What would be the reaction in the United States if this was implemented into our society?

What agricultural principle is being described and what does this say about the God's wisdom through the ages?

Describe what is being commanded in **Leviticus 25:8 – 22**.

Leviticus 25:23 – 28 describes, in part, what will be happening in **Ruth 3 – 4**.

Describe what is being commanded here.

What is God's purpose in establishing the Year of Jubilee and Kinsman Redeemer laws and what is the overall societal impact of them?

What is the lesson for us? Is there any way this should or could be implemented in our society?

Now note **Deuteronomy 25:5 – 10**. This describes the basic law concerning the “Levirate Marriage.” How does this Mosaic law differ from the Kinsman Redeemer law in terms of to whom it applies?

With this background, let’s read **Ruth 3:1 – 6**.

What do your commentaries say about Ruth washing and anointing herself with oil?

What practical advice does Naomi give Ruth in verse 3 that is good general principle for all of us? 😊

What risk is there for Ruth in complying with Naomi’s idea and why would Ruth go ahead with it?

Let’s read the rest of the chapter, **Ruth 3:7 – 18**.

Why does Ruth uncover Boaz’s feet? _____

Dr. Wilch points out that Naomi undoubtedly instructed Ruth to ask Boaz to “Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer” even though this directive wasn’t included in verses 1 – 6. What is the significance of the risk and boldness of this request and how does this request differ from the “Levirate marriage” laws/customs?
